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[For information on population density as of the 1953 Census, see AF13 Northwest China, 1: Washington, cat. 116, pp. 114-115.]

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The lower course of the Hsi River, also called the Pearl River, receives water from the Pei River in the north and the Tung River in the east. Both the Pei and Tung rivers are partially navigable in high-water seasons. Upon the crisscrossing waterways of the delta at the mouth of the Pearl River, water transportation has been developed to a high degree. The delta, Kwangtung's only flatland of any size, has the greatest density of population in China -- 2,900 per square mile.[6] 133 [161]

In addition to the several main rivers, lesser waterways which feed the two largest lakes in China, Tungting and Poyang, are of considerable volume and cover a large area in the middle of the region. The Hsiang, Tzu Yüan and Li Rivers empty into Tungting Lake, filling it in summer until it becomes a 2,000 square-mile body of water, which is reduced one-third in size in the winter. This annual fluctuation in volume formerly caused frequent damage, but the Peking regime claims that three separate hydraulic projects in the lake region assure the inhabitants a growing season free from drought or flood. The Poyang Lake in Kiangsi Province, fed by the Kan River and its tributaries, covers an area of 1,730 square miles. But accumulation of silt has been steadily reducing its capacity, and summer waters have often flooded the adjacent land. The flood threat on Poyang Lake, according to the Peking regime, has been reduced since the completion of the new dikes and

6. Ibid., p. 362.

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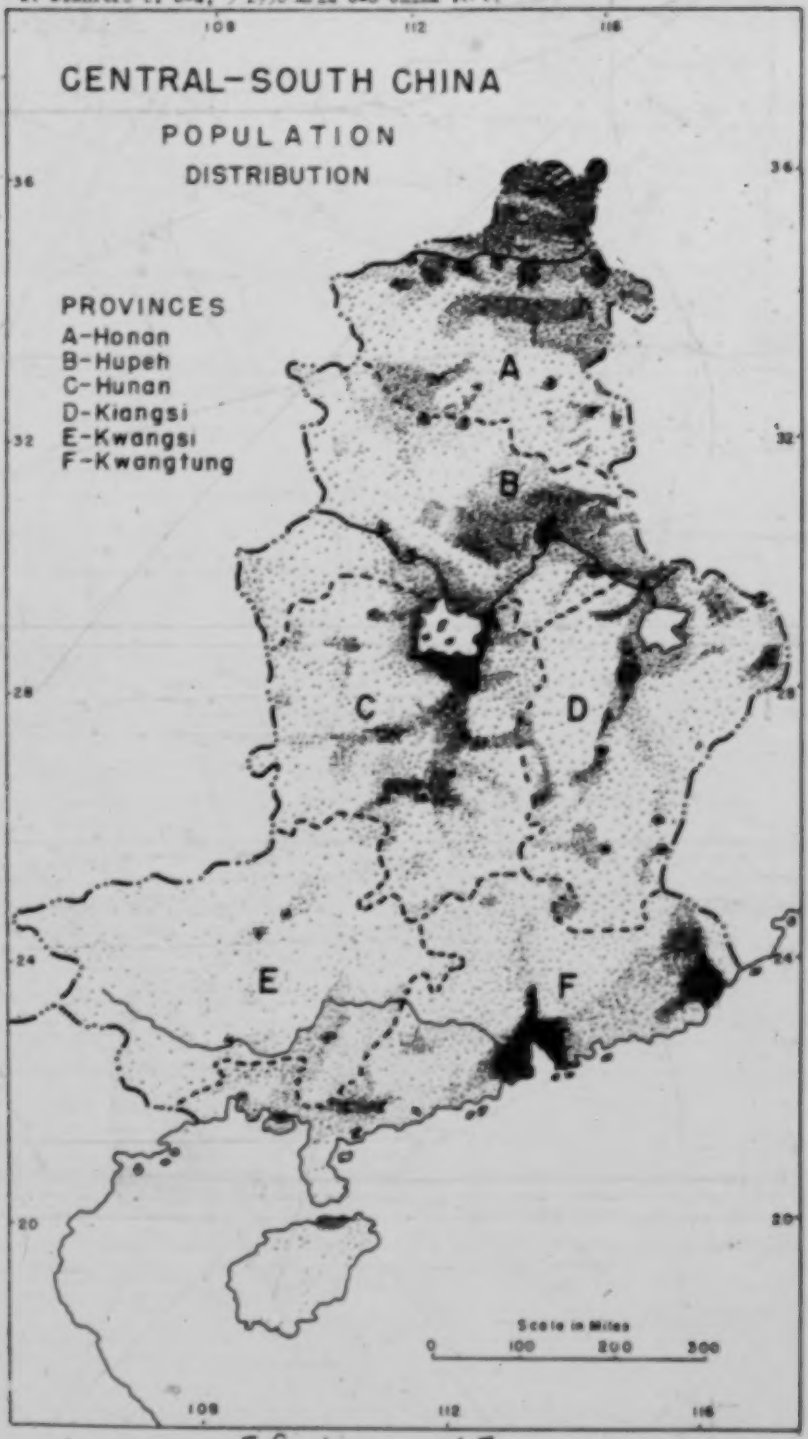

[facing p. 54]

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POPULATION

I. POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND DENSITY

On November 1, 1954, the Communist Statistical Bureau made public a communique on the results of the 1953 census,[1] giving the total Chinese population as 601,938,035. If we deduct the estimated figures for Taiwan (Formosa) and overseas Chinese, the total Chinese population in Mainland China is 582,603,147. Of this number, the figures for the six provinces constituting the Central-South Region are as follows:

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Table 1. Population of Central-South China */

Honan Province	44,214,594
Hunan Province	33,226,954
Hupeh Province	27,789,693
Kiangsi Province	16,772,865
Kwangsi Province	19,560,822 #/
Kwangtung Province	34,770,059 #/
Total	176,334,987

*/ Based on Kuang-ming Jih-pao [Enlightenment Daily], Peking, November 1, 1954, p. 1.

#/ An adjustment of the boundary between Kwangtung and Kwangsi was made on July 1, 1955, which may have affected population figures of these two provinces. (See chapter on Geographical Setting.)

1. "Kuan-yü Ch'üan-kuo Jen-k'ou Tiao-ch'a Teng-chi Chieh-kuo Kung-pao" ["Communique on Results of Census and Registration of China's Population"], Jen-min Jih-pao [People's Daily], Peking, November 1, 1954, p. 1; also see George B. Cressey, "Changing the Map of China," Far Eastern Quarterly, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 387-88.

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The accuracy of the figures in Table 1 is, of course, still open to question. Doubt may easily be cast upon these figures on the basis of any one or all of the following facts: (1) the 1953 census-taking was not thorough; in certain areas where direct counting of noses was not possible, undefined "indirect" methods (possibly estimates) were employed; (2) before the results of the census were announced, the responsible Communist quarters had already started a campaign to "correct the undesirable habit of filing false reports," and the Bureau of Statistics had begun to criticize the lack of reliability in the statistical work at various government levels.[2] Until 1952, the estimates on China's population cited by Communist officials had remained under 500 million. Early in 1953, several months before the census figures were completely tabulated, the same Communist officials stepped up their estimates to about 550 million. Thus there is ground for suspicion that the Peking government might have made a conscious effort to exaggerate the figures for propaganda purposes.[3]

However, until substantial evidence is discovered to justify suspicion of fabrication, the figures in Table 1 will stand as the result of the first and hereto only direct nation-wide census. Relative reliability seems to be supported by the following points: (1) They generally tally with the figures on the electorate, delegates and their representation in the general election for which the census was initiated.[4] (2) The fact that

2. Jen-min Jih-pao [People's Daily] , Peking, Mar. 31, 1954, p. 1.

3. Tsui-chin Ch'i-ko-yüeh Lai Chung-yao Fei-ch'ing Tsung-ho Pao-kao [Comprehensive Report on Important Developments in Communist China in the Last Seven Months] / Taipei, The Sixth Section, Central Committee, the Nationalist Party, 1954, pp. 22-23.

4. Yüan-li Wu, An Economic Survey of Communist China. New York, Bookman Assoc., 1956, pp. 13-22.

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scattered reports on the basic-level elections are available, roughly covering all parts of China, should serve to indicate the geographic extent to which, if not the degree of thoroughness with which, the census-taking was carried out. This thoroughness is unprecedented in China. (3) The Communists as far back as 1949 began their study of population, and it appears possible to say that the Peking regime had exercised considerable discretion in checking the 1953 census against the previously released figures. (4) Only a comparatively small portion of the 1953 population figures (about eight million) was derived from the so-called "indirect method of census-taking." (5) The above cited communique also reported on the review of these figures by the Bureau of Statistics. It states that after rechecking 9 per cent (or 52,950,000) of the total population in a cross-section of many different localities, the duplicates amounted to only 0.139 per cent and those uncounted in the initial registration only 0.255 per cent.

With the above observations and reservations, we will proceed to discuss the population figures in Table 1.

The total number of over 176 million for the Central-South Region is about 30.3 per cent of the total Mainland population. A comparison of the population figures and land areas by regions shows that the Central-South Region is first in population and third in land area. Its density of 151.23 per square kilometer (391.68 per sq. mi.) ranks third. A breakdown by provinces is as follows:

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Table 2. Density of Population in Central-South */ 161

	Population	
	Per Sq. Km.	Per Sq. Mi.
Honan Province	280.1	725.4
Hunan Province	151.2	391.6
Hupeh Province	115.0	297.8
Kiangsi Province	98.2	254.3
Kwangsi Province	79.3	205.3
Kwangtung Province	155.6	403.0
Regional Average	151.23	391.6

*/ Based on the 1953 census and Chung-hua Jen-min Kung-ho-kuo Fen-sheng Ti-t'u [Atlas of the People's Republic of China by Province], Shanghai, Ti-t'u ch'u-pan-she, 1953.

A region in the United States approximating the Central-South China Region in size and with some similar climatic and topographical features would consist of Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, and Georgia. The average population density in this part of the United States is 61 per square mile. A comparison shows that the Central-South China Region is more than six times as crowded.

II. COMPOSITION AND RATE OF GROWTH

Very few reports have been published in conjunction with the 1953 census. What little information that is available pertains mainly to the Chinese population as a whole. For example, the national average ratio between male and female is 51.82 per cent and 48.18 per cent.[5] 162

5. Pai Chien-hua, "Liu-wan-wan Jen Wo-kuo She-hui-chu-i Chien-she Ti Wei-ta Li-liang," ["Six Hundred Million People--A Great Strength for Socialist Construction of China,"] Jen-min Jih-pao [People's Daily], Peking, November 1 1954, p. 3.

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have drawn the line to include in the 1953 rural population the communities below a certain size. 162

Table 4. Rural and Urban Population in Central-South China (1948) */

	Rural	Urban
Honan Province	88.42	11.58
Hunan Province	74.31	25.69
Hupeh Province	90.80	9.20
Kiangsi Province	80.02	19.98
Kwangsi Province	79.62	20.38
Kwangtung Province	71.47	28.53
Regional Average	80.74	19.26

*/ Based on Chung-hua Min-kuo T'ung-chi T'i-yao [Statistical Abstract of the Republic of China], Taipei, Executive Yüan, Directorate-General of Budgets, Accounts and Statistics, 1955, p. 34.

The same Communist sources disclosed that, as of June 1953, the young and young-adult groups constitute an overwhelming majority of the total population. A 15.6 per cent figure is assigned to the 1-4 years age group and 11 per cent to the 5-9 years age group. Within the age bracket 18-79, the figure is approximately 58.9 per cent. No statistical data are available to indicate the exact age-group composition of the Central-South China population.

Based on 1953 census information, the national average birth rate is 3.7 per cent per year and the death rate is 1.7 per cent, a natural rate of increase of two per cent per year, which would be considered a high rate in any nation in the world. The Communists tend 161 163

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to attribute the significant increase in population during recent years to the improvement in medical service and sanitation measures and betterment of economic conditions generally. As specific evidence the Peking regime points to such places as the village group of Shen-chuang hsiang, Lu-shan hsien, in Honan Province. The information on population of this locality shown in Table 5 was obtained from the 1953 census: */

Table 5. Population of Shen-chuang Hsiang

Children		Sex Ratio		
Age	Number	Age	Male	Female
1	93	1	42	51
2	80	3	32	33
3	65	4	22	20
4	42	5-59	1,273	1,041

*/ Chu Wei, "What the Population Figures of a Hsiang Tell," People's China, June 16, 1954, pp. 16-18.

Lacking additional details, the figures in Table 5 may be open to any of the following interpretations: (1) The infant mortality in this locality through the past four years has been startlingly high. (2) Infant girls die more frequently than infant boys. (3) The birth rate has increased. (4) Social conditions have improved in general, including the abolition of such practices as infanticide, of which infant girls used to be common victims. The Communists do not hesitate, of course, to conclude that the two latter possibilities are actual fact, and there is no way to prove or disprove their claim since the mortality rate and other relevant information on the population of Shen-chuang has not been released.

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Another typical Communist claim pertaining to the growth in population is the report on the situation in central Honan Province. The two hsien of Hsi-hua (Sihwa) and Fu-kou (Fukow) had experienced many floods from the Yellow River system, and as a result the population in this area had been dwindling. However, the 1953 census figure of 706,963 for this area was described in the Chinese Communist press as representing a "tenfold increase" as compared with 1947.[6] Similar situations have been reported in other areas within this region where natural disasters once held down or reduced the population. Since "liberation," the population has grown rapidly. This trend is being cited repeatedly to substantiate Peking's claim of economic and social improvement throughout the region.

III. INTERNAL MIGRATION

There is no study available on the migration of population during World War II when the Central-South Region was despoiled. A national trend of return to war-ravaged areas once occupied by the Japanese was evident in 1945-49, and this region was no exception. The trend, however, was not well-defined and no accurate measurement of it was made because of the ensuing civil war and the chaotic conditions that prevailed throughout China immediately after the Japanese surrender. It probably will never be possible to compile statistics to show what percentage of the population in this war-dislocated region went back to urban centers in 1945-49 or drifted out of the cities in quest of a means of livelihood. After the establishment of the Peking regime, a systematic effort was made to relocate the population by (1) encouraging the surplus urban population to move to the countryside, to reclaim old abandoned farms or develop new ones, and (3) inducing or forcing people from congested

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culturists, absorbed most of these people into its operation, and drove the remnants higher and higher into the hills. The characteristically Chinese agriculture was intensive, that is, it uses large quantities of human labor in irrigating, fertilizing, and cultivating land for maximum yields. Its units of socio-economic organization is the village, composed of those families which cultivate the land within easy walking distance of its center. It was in the villages of rural China, spread over a vast area to exploit the land through a common technology, that the characteristic way of life developed. It is his family's village which is "home" to Chinese of all classes, no matter how far he may wander or how Westernized his life may have become. There are ties with his own family's past, symbolized by the ancestral temple and the family or clan burial ground. There are the other families with which his own has built an enduring network of reciprocal favors and obligations. It is in the farming villages that Communist Party workers now seek to bring about fundamental changes in the way of life and to break up the old complex of family and local loyalties.

What are the common patterns of village life from the plains of Honan to the delta of the Pearl River? We shall sketch these before discussing variations represented by urban life.

A. Village Life

First of all, life in the farming village is meager. In Honan in 1932 there was about one-half an acre of cultivated land per person; in the richer, semi-tropical province of Kwangtung there was one-fifth of an

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acre for each person.[1] Farm families save everything; fecal matter and refuse go into a pit, which also serves to feed the family pig, and at the time of spring fertilizing the material from the pit is mixed with topsoil and spread on the fields. Grass and grainstalks are carefully husbanded to be used as fuel for cooking and, rarely, for heating the house. Cloth is scarce and clothing is worn until it falls apart; after that the rags are used to make the soles of cloth shoes. The shortage of wood for all purposes has long been acute, and farm buildings are made of pounded earth, mud bricks and, in the rice region, of bamboo lathe and mud plaster. Floors are of earth, and only the dwellings of the wealthier farmers have glass windows. The dominant fact of life in the Chinese countryside is poverty. This has grown steadily worse during the last hundred years as factory-made goods destroyed village handicrafts, usury and tenancy increased, wars and ineffectual governments brought disruption and oppression, and overpopulation lowered the standard of living. "The most bankrupt countryside in Asia is the Chinese. The worst crisis of over-population China has yet had to face has been accompanied by a breakdown of traditional ideas and traditional authority so complete as to lead to a state of near anarchy."[2]

The characteristic way of life of the peasants has

1. George B. Cressey, Asia's Lands and Peoples, New York, 1944, p. 87. Cressey cites C. C. Chang "An Estimate of China's Land and Crops," Nanking, 1932; Cressey, p. 88: "...an average farm family of 6.2 persons must obtain its entire livelihood from a farm of 4.18 acres of which but 3.76 acres are actually in crops."

2. Maurice Zinkin, Asia and the West, London, 1951, p. 111.